Access
News on WCB products, programs, and services
December 2002

WCB ONLINE

Get ready for online reporting and remitting

Online reporting and remitting is just around the corner. This new way of doing business with the WCB becomes available to you in January 2003. But before you can start reporting your payroll, paying your premiums, or making changes to your account online, you must sign up and become a registered user of the WCB's online services.

If you sign up now, you can take advantage of the online services currently available — services like online rate information packages and the Incident and Injury Report — and be ready to go when the new reporting and remitting service is launched in the new year.

To sign up, all you need is the personal access code included in your rate information package.

Then follow these simple steps:

1. Go to **www.worksafebc.com** and select "login or sign-up."
2. Select "Sign Up" and enter your contact details to receive a temporary password.
3. Change your temporary password to a permanent one that you select.
4. Request access to a service, such as Online Reporting and Remitting.

Should you require any technical assistance in the sign up process, contact our Customer Support Centre by e-mailing **ehelp@wcb.bc.ca** or by calling **604 276-3135**, toll-free at **1 888 855-2477**.

Changes in 2003

Maximum assessable earnings

The maximum assessable earnings and the maximum coverage for Personal Optional Protection (POP) insurance will increase January 1, 2003. Maximum assessable earnings will increase to $60,100 from $59,600, while maximum POP insurance will increase to $5,008 per month from $4,966.

Assessment Policy Manual gets facelift

The *Assessment Policy Manual* will look entirely different when we launch our latest version in early 2003. While the policies will remain essentially the same, the manual will boast a new user-friendly format and clearer language. Look for it online in the new year at **www.worksafebc.com**.

New rates announced

For B.C. employers, the aggregate base rate in 2003 will increase 1.2 percent to $2.06 per $100 of assessable worker earnings, which is three cents more than the aggregate base rate in 2002. The aggregate rate is a composite of 95 rate groups, or insurance pools, which reflects the cost of injuries in industry sectors.

As is typical in rate setting, some industries will see lower base rates than the aggregate; others will see higher base rates than the aggregate. To limit extreme fluctuations, the WCB caps annual increases for any one industry at 20 percent.

The 2003 aggregate rate increase compares favorably with other jurisdictions. In Alberta, for instance, the aggregate rate will rise more than 12 percent next year. In Washington State, an increase of 40 percent is forecast. In other Canadian jurisdictions, rates are expected to rise from 5 to 9 percent.

While legislative changes made in June 2002 resulted in lower costs for workplace injuries, savings were offset by rising claim costs, falling financial markets, and a loss of the surplus investment income the WCB has previously enjoyed. The modest increase is a direct result of these factors. Even so, the 2003 rate

Continued

New rates cont'd

is down 10 percent from the 1996 peak.

Here's how it will look for B.C.'s 165,000 registered employers in 2003:

- 72,000 employers (44 percent) will see their base rate decrease or stay the same.
- 93,000 (56 percent) will see their base rate increase.

For full details on 2003 rates, visit the WCB web site at **www.worksafebc.com**. While you're there, go to our Online Services page where you can access rate information packages from previous years or sign up to enjoy future online services like online reporting and remitting.

CCRA agreement to simplify doing business in B.C.

Just think how much time you'd save if you could satisfy all your business registration needs in one place, at one time. You'd have more time to do the things that matter to you — like running your business or taking care of your clients. Saving you time is our goal too, and it's the root of our agreement with the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (CCRA).

The agreement paves the way for the Single Business Number project — a service designed for B.C. employers who deal with public agencies. It will eliminate the need for you to register the same information with different public agencies and will simplify the process of doing business online, in person, or over the phone.

As part of the agreement, the CCRA is assigning a 15-digit Business Number to all WCB accounts that have payroll. You'll see your number on this year's Employer Payroll and Contract Labour Report. While you can use your number immediately in your dealings with the WCB and the CCRA, you'll be able to use it with other provincial departments and agencies when the Single Business Number project is launched in late 2003.

If CCRA representatives don't have enough information to assign your Business Number, they may contact your firm before the end of the year.

For more information, go to our web site at **www.worksafebc.com** and select "Employers." Then, select "Managing your account" from the left-hand navigation and select the link to "CCRA Business Number."

Payment now applied to oldest amount

As of December 13, 2002, all payments made by employers will be applied to the oldest item on their account. This is a common business practice, similar to those used by Visa and MasterCard.

Occasionally employers with outstanding balances ask the WCB to allocate a payment to a specific quarter. This allows those employers to obtain a limited clearance for that period. Specified payments like this will no longer be permitted after December 13.

Since the vast majority of employers keep their accounts up to date, the change in the payment allocation process should be negligible.

For more information, contact our Employer Service Centre at **604 244-6181** or **1 888 922-2768**.

Changes to the WCB appeal system

Earlier this fall, the provincial government introduced Bill 63, Workers Compensation Amendment Act, (No. 2), 2002, which will change the WCB appeal structure. The major changes are:

- The levels of review and appeal of WCB decisions will be reduced from three to two.
- A new review function will be created at the WCB.
- A new independent, external Appeal Tribunal will be established as the final level of appeal.
- There will be legislative time limits for review and appeal decisions to be made.

Most of the changes to the appeal structure will take effect on March 3, 2003. Bill 63 provides guidance on how the transition will be made. Parties who wish to challenge a WCB decision should contact the office of the Workers' Advisers or the Employers' Advisers to ensure they understand their appeal rights during the transition period, as well as the timelines in which they may exercise these rights.

More information, including a set of frequently asked questions and the updated brochure *Guide to Bill 63 Amendments to the Workers Compensation Act, (No.2), 2002*, is available on the WCB's web site at **www.worksafebc.com/law_and_policy/legislation_and_regulation/new_legislation/default.asp.**

To order a free printed copy of the brochure, call WCB Publications and Videos at **604 276-3068** (toll-free in B.C. at **1 888 621-7233**, local **3068**), fax **604 279-7406**, or e-mail **pubvid@wcb.bc.ca**.

NAOSHWeek winners

NAOSHWeek is held annually throughout North America to challenge employers, employees, and the general public to increase awareness of occupational health and safety issues.

NAOSHWeek 2002 winners:
Best Overall - Interfor, Squamish Lumber Division
Best New Entry - Pollard Banknote Limited
Most Innovative Entry - BC Housing Management Commission
Most Closely Representing Theme - Overwaitea Foods, #918, Fleetwood, Surrey
Divisional awards:
Construction - American Bridge/Surespan
Educational Institutions - Simon Fraser University
Federally Regulated Agencies - Canadian Forces Base, 19 Wing Comox
Forestry - Interfor, Squamish Lumber Division
General Industry - BC Gas Utility Ltd.
Health Care - Columbus Residence
Manufacturing - Pollard Banknote Limited
Marine - Vancouver Shipyards Co. Ltd.
Municipalities - City of Surrey
Provincial/Crown Corporations - BC Ferry Corporation, Langdale Terminal
Retail - Overwaitea Food, #17, Duncan
Tourism/Hospitality - Canadian Hotel Income Properties
Transportation - Rempel Brothers Concrete and Steelhead Aggregates

NAOSHWeek 2003 will take place from May 4 to 10. To help your organization prepare, use the NAOSHWeek planning guide and poster. To download the guide and poster, or for more information, visit the NAOSHWeek web site at **www.worksafebc.com/news/campaigns/naosh_week/default.asp.**

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WorkSafe
WORKERS' COMPENSATION BOARD
Communications Services
Workers' Compensation Board of B.C.
PO Box 5350 Stn Terminal
Vancouver BC V6B 5L5